

James and Mary Scherdon House
1426 2nd Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5829

HABS
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
JAMES AND MARY SCHERDON HOUSE

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Location: 1426 2nd Avenue

Date of Erection: 1883

Description: Two-and-a-half stories in height, this frame dwelling still retains its horizontal wood siding. There are two windows in each floor of the front facade and a single central window in the attic story; the front door is at the extreme right. Ornamental trim may have been removed over the years, but the plainness of the window surrounds suggests that it was always modest. Three small brackets fit below the returns of the fairly deep but otherwise plain cornice. A gable-front projecting porch, old but not original, covers only two-thirds of the house front and retains a coal chute into the basement at sidewalk level.

History: In contrast to houses that have remained in one or two families, a second pattern of ownership in the Fourth Ward area shows a steadily changing stream of owners and inhabitants over time. James Sheridan (Scherdon) was a resident of Altoona as early as 1873, working as a laborer and living on 3rd Avenue near 14th Street. Tax books show that he acquired an empty half-lot from John Wright in time for an 1882 assessment. A deed shows the purchase of the lot, for \$225, in January 1883. In either case, by 1883 Scherdon was assessed at \$200 for a half-lot and house on 2nd Avenue. Addresses have sometimes shifted in the Fourth Ward, and James Scherdon's home listed at "1424 2d Ave." in an 1886 directory is probably the current No. 1426. Scherdon was a laborer that year, but in 1891 had become constable of the Fourth Ward, living at the current address. M. J. Scherdon, working in general merchandise, also lived here in 1892.

On July 6, 1892, James and his wife, Mary H. Scherdon, sold the property, now described as 24' x 120' and worth \$1,400, to Ignatius Kramer. The Scherdons moved down the block to 1428 2nd Ave. Ignatius and Mary Kramer are not listed in directories during the years of their ownership--they kept the property only two years, selling it on December 29, 1894, to John Koeck (Koeck) for \$1,100.

John Koeck was a laborer when he lived here in 1898-99. He was a molder in 1914-15, when Caroline was also listed as a resident and John Jr. worked as a laborer. In 1925 Caroline was a widow living here with six children and/or relatives; of these, four women worked, three as stenographers and the fourth at the S. H. silk mill, while one male was employed in auto repairs.

In 1936, a sheriff's sale transferred ownership from the estate of John's widow Caroline Koeck to Carolyn Flynn, a Koeck heir, and her husband Dennis C. Flynn. When Dennis and Carolyn M. Flynn lived here in 1939, Dennis was a constable like James Scherdon before him. In another sheriff's sale in December 1941, the Flynn's passed the title to the Phoenix Building and Loan Association. In 1945, George B. and Edna F. Kyle acquired the property for \$3,000. They lived here in 1945 when George worked as a machinist for the PRR. George B. Kyle died in September 1961, and Edna sold the property to its current owners ten years later.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1894. Deed books: 49/651, 92/666, 105/66, 432/134, 465/320, 508/291, 923/45.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods. See HABS No. PA-5828 for a photo of the James and Mary Scherdon House.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.